

SPECIFICATION AMENDMENTS

I. On pages 5-7 of the specification under the heading entitled “Brief Description of the Drawings”:

A preferred embodiment of the present invention will now be described by way of example with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

FIGURE [[1]] 5 is a front perspective view of a preferred embodiment of the present invention illustrating a tray interiorly fitted with a grate for supporting foot apparel atop thereof;

FIGURE 2 is a top plan view of the preferred embodiment of the present invention illustrating a tray;

FIGURE 3 is a front perspective view of the preferred embodiment of the present invention illustrating a tray;

FIGURE 4 is a top plan view of the preferred embodiment of the present invention illustrating a tray interiorly fitted with a grate;

FIGURE [[5]] 1 is a front perspective view of the preferred embodiment of the present invention illustrating a folding frame structure arranged with a pair of tray support assemblies each comprising a tray with an interiorly situated grate collectively positioned therebelow;

FIGURE 6 is a front perspective view of an alternative embodiment of the present invention illustrating a folding frame structure fitted with a pair of tray support assemblies each comprising a tray positioned therebelow;

FIGURE 7 is a mirror end view of the alternative embodiment of the present invention illustrating a pair of tray support assemblies positioned in between elongate vertical members of a leg;

FIGURE 8 is a top plan view of the alternative embodiment of the present invention illustrating a tray support assembly positioned in between left and right legs; and

FIGURE 9 is a front cross sectional view of the alternative embodiment of the present invention taken on line 9—9 of FIG. 8 illustrating a pair of tray support assemblies positioned in between left and right legs [[:]] .

~~FIGURE 10 is a side elevational view of the alternative embodiment of the present invention illustrating an L-shaped member having upper and lower positioning plates;~~

~~FIGURE 11 is a front elevational view of the alternative embodiment of the present invention illustrating a rod having threaded ends situated in between a pair of L-shaped members each having upper and lower positioning plates;~~

~~FIGURE 12 is a perspective view of the alternative embodiment of the present invention illustrating a tray rail comprising a pair of L-shaped members each having upper and lower positioning plates and connectively fastened together by a rod;~~

~~FIGURE 13 is a front perspective view of the alternative embodiment of the present invention illustrating a tray suspended below a plurality of support members by a pair of tray rails; and~~

~~FIGURE 14 is a partial perspective view of the alternative embodiment of the present invention illustrating a tray rail comprising a pair of L-shaped members connected to and suspended below a plurality of support members.~~

II. On pages 7-15 of the specification under the heading entitled “Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiment”:

{Note: The section entitled “Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiment” is reproduced downbelow in its entirety and reflects or incorporates the amendments made previously in Applicant’s Response to Restriction Requirement and Preliminary Amendment dated November 16, 2005 and newly made amendments presented hereunder}

While this invention is susceptible of being embodied in many different forms, the preferred embodiment of the invention is illustrated in the accompanying drawings and described in detail hereinafter with the understanding that the present disclosure is to be considered to exemplify the principles of the present invention and is not intended to limit the invention to the embodiments illustrated and presented herein. The present invention has particular utility as a device for holding and storing foot apparel and the like and collecting and retaining water, snow and debris temporally released therefrom.

Referring now to FIG. 1, there is shown generally at 10 a rack assembly fitted with trays ~~tray~~ 26 each primarily serving as a reservoir for collecting water, snow and debris released from foot apparel 28 situated atop a grate 48 interiorly fitted within the tray. As shown in FIG. 2, ~~the~~ each tray preferably comprises a base 38 integrally connected to inclined sides 40 extending upwardly therefrom, along the periphery thereof and terminating at an upper rim 42. The inclined sides primarily function to prevent the accumulation of debris thereabout while allowing continuous flow downwardly toward the base to ensure full usage of the tray's volumetric capacity. In most applications, the inclined sides are positioned outwardly in angular fashion by approximately 25° to an axis perpendicular to the base to further this purpose, as best illustrated along path M in FIG. 3. The upper rim 42 comprises a ledge 44 having an upper exposed surface 46 for receiving thereon grate 48 and a lower exposed surface 50 for engaging an upper portion 52 of the guide rail. Integrally made part of the rim is a supportive wall 54 extending upwardly from the upper exposed surface of the ledge 44. The supportive wall primarily serves as means for maintaining the orientation and position of the grate while positioned atop the upper exposed surface and reinforcing the structural integrity of the rim 42 while bearing loads comprising foot apparel, water, snow, and debris. As shown in FIG. 4, the grate comprises a frame 56 having an overall geometric configuration corresponding to the arrangement of the ledge insofar to allow the frame to rest entirely upon the upper exposed surface 46. A plurality of support members 58 positioned within and integrally connected to the frame 56 collectively serve as means for supporting foot apparel 28

while simultaneously allowing the passing of water, snow and debris into the tray 26, as depicted in FIG. 5. Accordingly, the support members are positioned parallel to and spaced equally apart from one another within the frame to form and define a plurality of elongate openings 60. It is noted herein that the orientation and spacing of the ~~supporting braces~~ support members may vary in each application to accommodate a variety of shoe types yet affording passage of water, snow and debris collectively released therefrom. For instance, the support members of elongate configuration as illustrated in FIG. 4 may extend parallel to a pair of shortened end members 62 of the frame and connect to and terminate at side members 64 of the frame to enhance the overall structural integrity of the grate to the extent of mitigating deformation of the grate upon placing heavily weighted foot apparel thereon. Preferably, the frame as well as the support members fitted therewithin collectively comprises a uniform height suitably corresponding to the height of the supportive wall 54. This configuration ensures that the rim 42 and its structural features do not unduly interfere with the foot apparel as it is slidably removed from and placed about the grate 48, ~~notably in the instance where the tray 26 is used as a standalone device as shown in FIG. 1~~. The grate in its preferred embodiment is constructed of strong lightweight metal coated with vinyl. Lightweight metal suitably serves in strengthening the grate to maintain rigidity while lessening the overall weight of the tray and grate to enhance its handling capacity. The vinyl coating is an attractive inexpensive material to provide corrosion protection to metal that may contact water and snow released from the foot apparel. It is anticipated that any material comprising the above-noted characteristics, such as wood, plastic, carbon fiber, or a combination thereof, may be used to construct the grate providing it offers resistance to premature corrosion during normal usage. In typical applications, the tray preferably comprises a width of approximately 24" and a length of approximately 16", forming a surface area notably capable of holding two large pairs of shoes. In regard to this rectangular dimension and a depth of approximately 1.5", the tray sufficiently comprises a volumetric capacity to hold and retain a liquid and solid mixture released from approximately ten pairs of shoes over a 1-2 week period. More continuous usage, particularly during snowy conditions, may

necessitate frequent handling of the tray for purposes of emptying and cleaning or usage of a tray having a larger volumetric capacity to what has been described for the preferred embodiment.

Referring now to FIG. 1, the ~~tray~~ trays 26 ~~and each~~ interiorly situated fitted with a grate 48 may ~~collectively~~ be placed within and supported by a folding frame structure 66, or as shown in FIG. 6, the ~~tray~~ trays may be ~~suitably~~ alternatively arranged within the folding frame structure without the presence of the ~~grate~~ grates. In either one of these two embodiments of the present invention, the folding frame structure preferably comprises left and right legs 68, 70 pivotally fastened to at least one tray support assembly 72 situated thereinbetween. Each leg, as shown in FIG. 7, comprises upper and lower elongate horizontal members 68a, 70a, 68b, 70b and a pair of elongate vertical members 68c, 70c each having ends fastened to one another to form a leg of rectangular configuration. Although the legs primarily function to support the tray support assembly, the upper horizontal members may supplement as means for handling the folding frame structure, particularly useful in carrying the folding frame structure 66 from location to location and facilitating assembly and disassembly. Preferably, each leg 68, 70 is integrally ~~construction~~ constructed from a continuous piece of tubing and bent accordingly to form the desired rectangular shape of the leg. Each vertical member comprises an inner face 68d, 70d for engaging and mounting thereon a portion of the tray support assembly. As shown in FIG. 8, each tray support assembly 72 comprises forward and aft horizontal supports 74, 76 positioned parallel to one another with each horizontal support having a pair of ends 74a, 76a affixed to the left and right legs. Each end of the horizontal support comprises a stem 74b, 76b extending outwardly and perpendicular therefrom to engage and fit into an aperture 78 extending into and through the inner face 68d, 70d of each vertical member, which collectively serve as means for allowing the tray support assembly to simultaneously fold together with each of the legs for short- or long-term storage of the folding frame structure 66. Preferably, each stem comprises a predetermined length which allows for secure placement within the aperture while avoiding interference or binding with an outer face 68e, 70e of each vertical member.

Like the structure noted for the grate 48, the tray support assembly 72 further comprises a plurality support bars 80 of elongate form positioned parallel to one another and situated perpendicular and connected at their ends to the horizontal supports 74, 76 to collectively form a plurality of lengthened openings 82, which suitably allow for placement and support of foot apparel while allowing uninhibited passage of water, snow and debris therethrough into the tray 26, as best illustrated in FIGS. 8 and 9. It is noted herein that the size of the lengthened openings may be altered in such a manner to accommodate specific needs, number, or configuration of the foot apparel. In order to prevent frictional binding of the horizontal support with that of the vertical member during pivotal movement, the support bars 80 comprise a predetermined length to establish the tray support assembly's size to fit accordingly within the confines of each leg 68, 70, preferably establishing a $\frac{1}{4}$ " space in between the inner face and horizontal support. To enhance rigidity of the folding frame structure and maintain a perpendicular orientation of the tray support assembly 72 relative to the legs, each horizontal support comprises a pair of angular braces 84 each having top and bottom ends 84a, 84b. As illustrated in FIG. 6, the bottom end of each angular brace comprises an aperture 86 for receiving therethrough a fastener 88, rivet, or equivalent type of fastener which extends into and terminates within each horizontal support 74, 76. The top end of the angular brace is mounted to the vertical member 68c, 70c in such a manner as to allow the angular brace to extend approximately 45° to the longitudinal axis of the tray support assembly 72. Mounting of the angular brace 84 at this preferred angular relation is accomplished by a hook 90 integrally made part of the top end 84a. A pin 92 extending outwardly and perpendicular from the inner face 68d, 70d primarily functions to engage an inner space 90a of the hook and position the angular brace accordingly. In preferred applications, the inner space of the hook comprises a diameter which suitably promotes a frictionally fit about the pin. As shown in FIG. 7, each pin 92 comprises an end cap 94 to prevent the top end 84a of the angular brace from becoming inadvertently disengaged by the occurrence of lateral movement of the tray support assembly 72. A space 96 formed in between the inner face of the vertical member and end cap substantially corresponds to

the thickness of the material to construct the angular brace 84, collectively configured to mitigate inadvertent release of the angular brace from the pin 92 and maintain rigidity to the folding frame structure 66 while in an ~~assemble~~ assembled state. In preventing each of the angular braces from interfering or binding with the inner face 68d, 70d upon collapsing the folding frame structure, each angular brace 84 further comprises an offsetting intermediate member 98 integrally connected to and situated within the top and bottom ends 84a, 84b. The degree to which the angular brace is offset depends on the geometric configuration of the tray support assembly 72 and its ability to move and be located within the confines of the leg.

Connected to and hanging downwardly from the tray support assembly 72 are left and right tray rails 100, 102 for slidably receiving the tray 26. Each tray rail, as illustrated in FIGS. 6 and 7, comprises a pair of L-shaped members 104 each having vertical and horizontal elements 104a, 104b. The vertical element comprises a first end 106 integrally connected to the horizontal support 74, 76 and a second end 108 integrally connected to an end 110 of the horizontal element extending outwardly and perpendicular from the vertical element 104a. A rod 112 extending from and integrally connected to a free end 114 of each of the horizontal elements 104b serves in supplementing the strength of the tray rail 100, 102 to the extent of supporting the collective weight of the tray 26, foot apparel, and accumulating water, snow, and debris. Preferably, each horizontal element comprises a length substantially corresponding to the depth of the ledge to receive and adequately support the tray. To promote sliding of the tray in and out of the tray rails, each tray 26 comprises an effective length slightly less than the distance maintained in between the pair of tray rails 100, 102 mounted below the horizontal supports 74, 76. ~~In other embodiments noted herein, as shown in FIGS. 10 and 11, each L-shaped member 104 may comprise a plate assembly 116 affixed to the first end 106 of the vertical element to facilitate removal and installation from and to the tray support assembly 72 as well as being used in applications where a grating arrangement is provided and comprises a configuration substantially equivalent to the arrangement of the support members 58 contained within the frame 56 in the preferred embodiment or the~~

~~support bars 80 contained within the tray support assembly 72 in the alternative embodiment. For instance, a wire rack of the type used in typical shelving installations as well as many other available uses may suitably accept for installation the tray rails 100, 102 equipped with the plate assembly. The plate assembly 116, as illustrated in FIGS. 10 and 12, comprises upper and lower positioning plates 118, 120 each having a pair of concave runners 122 extending parallel to one another with each runner being shaped to substantially conform to the geometric configuration of the support bars 80 or support members 58. For illustrative purposes, the upper positioning plate is positioned atop the support members with the concave runners facing downwardly to engage a top side 124 of the support members, as shown in FIG. 13. In like manner, the lower positioning plate is positioned below the support members with the concave runners of the upper positioning plate facing upwardly to engage a bottom side 126 of the support members. As depicted in FIG. 13, the upper and lower positioning plates 118, 120 are held together about the support member 58 by a screw 128 extending downwardly from the upper positioning plate and through the lower positioning plate and terminating at or near the first end 106 of the vertical element. To ensure proper orientation and alignment of each of the tray rails and prevent inadvertent twisting upon slidably moving the tray 26 in and out from the tray rails 100, 102, the free ends of the horizontal element, like the preferred embodiment, are connectively fastened together by an elongate support 130. However, to further provide for assembly and disassembly of the tray rails from the support members 58, support bars 80 or an equivalent grating structure, the elongate support comprises threaded ends 132 threadably fitted into a threaded portion 134 of each of the free ends substantially in the manner shown in FIGS. 12 and 14.~~

~~In operation of the preferred embodiment, the tray 26 is simply fitted with the grate and collectively placed into the cabinet 12 by slidably positioning the ledge of the rim onto the guide rail 14b, 16b and moving the collective arrangement inwardly until the front supportive wall of the tray sits flush with the front leading edge 30 of the left and right sidewalls 14, 16. Alternatively, the tray and grate combination may simply be located near the entryway as a standalone, operating device or placed within a shelf~~

~~assembly suitably constructed to support the weight of the tray, grate, and collected waste mixture.~~

~~In operation of the alternative embodiment, as structural noted hereinbefore~~ In preparing the folding frame structure for receiving the trays 26, the folding frame structure 66 is opened if presently in a collapsed state by handling the upper elongate horizontal member 68a of the left leg and lower elongate horizontal member of the right leg or vice versa and pulling outwardly from one another until the tray support assembly 72 is positioned perpendicular to the elongate vertical members of the leg 68, 70. Once in this position, each angular brace 84 is pivotally moved about the fastener 88 attached to the horizontal support and positioned accordingly to permit the top end bearing the hook to engage the pin. ~~The~~ Each tray 26 ~~absent~~ fitted with or without the grate 48 is then slidably positioned onto the tray rails 100, 102 of the tray support assembly, ensuring that the lower exposed surface 50 of the ledge fully rests upon and contacts the horizontal elements 104b of the L-shaped members and rods 112 ~~or elongate support 130.~~

It can be seen from the foregoing that there is provided in accordance with this invention a simple and easily operated device, which is particularly suitable for supporting foot apparel and collecting and retaining water, snow, and debris temporarily released therefrom. The rack and tray assembly is completely functional in terms of ridding water and debris from an entryway of a residential or commercial building structure while providing means for localizing the storage of foot apparel and the like. It is obvious that the components comprising the rack and tray assembly may be fabricated from a variety of materials, providing such selection or use of materials possess the capacity to withstand forces acting thereon throughout its duration of use in a residential or commercial setting. Accordingly, it is most desirable, and therefore preferred, to construct the tray from plastic and grate and folding frame structure from steel suitably coated with vinyl or an equivalent surface material capable of preventing premature corrosion of the substrate. To lessen the cost and simplify construction of the rack and tray assembly 10, the tray support assembly 72, legs 68, 70 and grate 48 are preferably fabricated from unified pieces of tubular metal, with the tray being injected molded in the

form noted herein to meet its desired utility.

While there has been shown and described a particular embodiment of the invention, it will be obvious to those skilled in the art that various changes and alterations can be made therein without departing from the invention and, therefore, it is aimed in the appended claims to cover all such changes and alterations which fall within the true spirit and scope of the invention.

III. On page 21 of the specification under the heading entitled "Abstract of the Disclosure" delete in its entirety and replace with the following:

A rack and tray assembly for supporting foot apparel and collecting and retaining water, snow and debris temporally released therefrom. The rack and tray assembly comprising a folding frame structure having left and right legs and a tray support assembly situated and mounted thereinbetween for supporting at least one tray. Each tray comprising inclined sides extending upwardly from a base and terminating an upper rim collectively forming a reservoir for holding and retaining water, snow, and debris released from foot apparel. The upper rim comprising a ledge having an upper exposed surface for receiving thereon a grate and a lower exposed surface for engaging left and right tray rails integrally made part of and extending downwardly from the tray support assembly, which substantially serve to position each tray above a floor's surface to prevent inadvertent spillage of water, snow and debris contained therein.